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LI Goes on Offense For Defense Contracts

December 23, 2002

Rep. Steve Israel couldn't have been any blunter.

The Dix Hills Democrat said he is willing to devote considerable energy and political capital among his congressional colleagues toward ensuring that Long Island gets its share when \$38 billion in federal procurement dollars for homeland security is doled out.

But if the executives, government officials and college administrators he had gathered to devise a collaborative action plan turned into another all-talk-but-no-action group in which, as he put it, everybody holds hands and sings "Kumbaya," well, he had better things to do with his time.

And, truth be told, there were more than a couple of people who sensed they were hearing the song in their heads as they left the meeting Wednesday at EDO Corp. in Deer Park, even though the group included some heavy hitters from Northrop Grumman, Telephonics, EDO, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Invision, tech-related business groups and government officials. The doubters included people like Dick Lippe, counsel to the software group LISTnet, who said that if he'd been running things, he wouldn't have let people leave the room without checkbooks being opened to fund an operation that would include a paid executive director.

Memo to Israel: Don't give away that time in your schedule - not yet. At least one of your guests is trying to turn talk into action.

Yacov Shamash, who among his many titles is vice president for business development at Stony Brook University, has put together a subcommittee of five - he wouldn't name them, so as not to anger those who were left out - to produce within a month a "white paper" delineating specific projects and ways to maximize Long Island's manufacturing, technology and scientific resources.


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"It's important that we don't just leave it to sit out there," Shamash said a couple of days later. "The congressman has given us a challenge, he's given us a great opportunity. Now it's up to us to come back to him and say, 'Hey, you know, we have something to discuss.'"

By the way, expect the plan to be considerably different than ones in the past, reflecting the change in Long Island's economy from being large-company defense-based to being made up of many more companies that are considerably more diverse. Israel noted that in his district alone, there were 1,100 companies who could vie for some piece of the homeland defense pie.

As EDO's Frank Otto pointed out at the meeting, the billion-dollar main contracts, the ones that used to go to the Grumman and AILs and Republics, will be going to the Lockheed Martins. Long Island's best shot is for a share of the subcontracting work. "We have to figure out what our niche is," Otto said, "and what we can offer those primes."

Hey, Execs, Pay Attention

Who is Susan Battley and why is she sending out those lists?

The answers: She's a Stony Brook- based "leadership psychologist" who hopes that the compilations she calls "The Most Noteworthy Attention Deficits of 2002" and "Battley's Recommendations to Leaders" will prompt executives at the Fortune 100 clients of Battley Performance Consulting, and others, to take stock of their own behavior.

It's the second time Battley has put together the lists, which she'll use in presentations to groups and in television appearances she'll be making starting later this week.

The attention deficit list includes Joseph Berardino, the former chief executive of Arthur Andersen, who was too slow in responding to the crisis at his firm about its advice to Enron; former Enron chief executive Jeff Skilling, who told Congress all was well on his watch; and people like former Vivendi head Jacques Messier, who courted American business while not taking care of his corporate base in his home country of France.

"These are exceptional, brilliant people who had an outstanding track record of success in a different business era," Battley said. "The skills, the competencies these people have that got them to that level of success did not support their success in a different business environment."

The second list has advice that includes: "Neutralize threats.... Protect your reputation. Pay utmost attention to ethics. . . ." And our favorite: "Avoid stardom. The myth of the celebrity CEO has been shattered."

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